

Story 2041 (Transcribed from  
tape of Atatürk İlkokulu.)

Narrator: Saliha Atak, 11

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town of Bursa  
Province

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The Gullible Butcher and His Beautiful Wife

Once there was and once there was not a pair of friends who decided to go hunting. It was snowing quite hard. When one of them shot a rabbit, a drop of its blood glistened on the snow. The first hunter said, "Aha, my friend, is there any woman as beautiful as that?"

The other hunter said, "Yes, there is a woman as beautiful as that, the wife of a butcher, but people are not permitted to see her. She is kept in a place secured by forty locks.

"I shall find that woman," said the first hunter.

After they had returned from their hunting trip, the first friend took a bag of gold, mounted his horse, and rode away. He went little, he went far,<sup>1</sup> and after awhile he reached the country in which the butcher and his beautiful wife lived. One evening he saw an old woman

<sup>1</sup>This is the beginning of a formulaic routine used in Turkish folktales to indicate figuratively and colorfully a very long journey.

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and asked her, "Grandmother, will you accept me in your house as a guest for the night?"

"My son," she answered, "I do not have any place for you to stay in my small house." But after he had given her several gold liras, she said, "Come in, my son. I shall somehow make a place for you to stay

Before he retired that night, the young man said, "Grandmother, I have heard that there is a butcher who lives here with an extremely beautiful wife. Is there any way in which I can see her?"

"You will probably never be able to see her," answered the old woman, "but I shall go anyway and ask for permission for you to do so

Early in the morning of the next day, the old woman went to the house of the butcher. When she knocked on the door, she was met by the young wife. "I have come to visit you, my child," said the old woman, and entered the butcher's house. After the two had talked for a few minutes, the old woman said, "The son of a bey<sup>2</sup> has

<sup>2</sup>A bey was an aristocratic landholder during pre-Republican times. His title and property were heritable. There is no indication at the beginning of this tale that the protagonist was the son of a bey, but from here on throughout the rest of the story he bears that title.

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come to this town with the hope of gazing upon your beauty."

butcher's wife answered, "If he could manage to have a tunnel dug between your house and ours, he would be able to see me."

The old woman returned home and there reported to the young man the conversation that she had had with the wife of the butcher. After the son of the bey had had a tunnel dug between the old woman's house and the home of the butcher, the young man went to visit the beautiful wife of the butcher.

On the following day, the son of the bey went to the butcher shop and greeted its owner, "Hello, my brother-in-law."

the butcher paid little attention to this remark. When he returned home that evening, he said to his wife, "Some man came in and called me brother-in-law. I did not pay any attention to him, because I do not have a brother-in-law.

Hearing that, his wife began to cry, saying, "It was probably the husband of my older sister."

"Don't cry," said the butcher. "He may come to the

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shop again tomorrow."

This turned out to be an accurate statement, for the next morning the son of the bey appeared again in the butcher shop. And once again he greeted the butcher by saying, "Hello, my brother-in-law!"

The butcher welcomed him and then asked, "Where are you staying here in this town?"

"In that small house down there at the end of this street. A grandmotherly woman who lives there accepted me as a guest. Come there and visit us this evening."<sup>3</sup>

The butcher returned home at the end of the day and said to his wife, "My lady, I am going to meet your older sister this evening. Your brother-in-law invited me to visit them in the home where they are staying while in this town." Having told her about this, he changed his clothes and started for the home of the old lady. But his wife, after changing her looks somewhat, rushed through the tunnel and arrived at the old lady's house before he

<sup>3</sup>It would be very unusual in Turkey for a relative to be left in the lodging of a stranger. Once he believed that the son of the bey was his brother-in-law, the butcher would, under normal circumstances, have insisted that his relative move into his own house for the remainder of his stay in that town.

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reached there.

When he knocked on the door, it was opened by his own wife, who invited him in, saying, "Welsome, enişte!"<sup>4</sup> She then kissed his hand.

As the two men were talking together, the butcher said to the son of the bey, "Brother-in-law, your wife is very much like my own wife."

"Yes, of course. Are they not sisters?"

When the butcher was about to return to his own house, he said to the son of the bey and the woman with him, "I shall come back here tomorrow morning to see you off on your journey to your own home." Going swiftly through the tunnel, the butcher's wife reached their house before her husband did. When he arrived there, he said to his wife, "Your sister looks very much like you. I shall go tomorrow morning and see them off on their trip home."

The next morning the wife of the butcher reached the grandmother's house before he did. In fact, when the butcher

<sup>4</sup>Throughout most of this tale the word bakanak is used to indicate brother-in-law. It is a general term to suggest this relationship. Enişte, used just this one time, is a somewhat more restricted term meaning husband of an aunt or husband of a sister.

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arrived there, he found that the son of the bey and the woman were already mounted on horses. "Farewell!" they said.

But the butcher shouted, "Wait a minute! Brother-in-law, give me your address so that I shall be able to come and visit you.

The son of the bey took from his pocket a card and wrote upon it, "This butcher is a stupid fellow. He gives away his beautiful wife to a stranger. He is so stupid that he even wished a safe journey to me and to his former wife as we departed.

After the travelers had departed, the butcher looked at what the son of the bey had written. It seemed very long, and it did not look like an address, but the butcher was unable to read. He therefore took it to the local hoca<sup>5</sup> and asked him to read it aloud. The hoca read, "This butcher is really a very stupid person. He is a man

<sup>5</sup>A hoca is the preacher and the religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times in Turkey the hoca was also a teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. Since the founding of the Republic (1923), there has been a separation of "church" and state which requires that schoolteachers have a secular rather than a religious training. There lingers in the language, however, an identification between the word hoca and the word teacher. Turkish students from elementary school through the university may refer to an admired instructor as hoca.



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who gives his wife to a stranger. He not only gives away his wife, but he even gives a courteous send-off to his wife and her lover."

As soon as the butcher heard this, he hurried home to see if his wife was there, but he found the house empty. When he drew back the curtains from a window, he could see in the distance the home of the grandmotherly old woman. He went to her house and cut her into many pieces.